

Member of Parliament Seminar

October 2011



David Dreier, Chairman • David Price, Ranking Democratic Member

Strengthening Committee Operations in the Legislature

From October 24 to 28, 2011, the House Democracy Partnership (HDP) organized a weeklong seminar for 13 Members of Parliament from three HDP partner countries (Afghanistan, Haiti, and Peru). This program, which focused on strengthening committee operations in the legislature, was organized in cooperation with the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

The Members of Parliament met with a dozen of their counterparts in the U.S. House of Representatives to discuss the organization and operation of public committee hearings, the importance of committee oversight, legislative ethics, the support Members receive from agencies such as the Congressional Research Service (CRS) and the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), and the role of a committee chairperson.

The program began with an overview of the U.S. committee structure by CRS. Senior staff members of House committees and support agencies discussed how committees set their agendas in consultation with House leadership, how committee press operations are managed, how legislative drafting takes place, and how budget analysis is provided by CBO for the Congress. In addition, participants also met with the Chief Operating Officer of the Government Accountability Office and the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs; observed a hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs; and compared and contrasted their own committee systems with one another's.

This was the 13th seminar for Members of Parliament organized by HDP since the commission was established in 2005. HDP has also organized seven parliamentary staff institutes in Washington, D.C. for staff of HDP partner countries in areas such as committee operations, budget analysis, and research and analysis. Additionally, the Commission has undertaken regional staff seminars in Kenya, Macedonia, and Poland; three joint MP/staff training seminars; and twenty-four outbound Congressional delegations to HDP partner countries.